UNITED NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/47/419/Add.3
26 October 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-seventh session
Agenda item 83

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

1. In its resolution 1992/40 entitled "Activities of the United Nations system in the Baltic States and the Commonwealth of Independent States", the Economic and Social Council reaffirmed the importance it attached to an integrated United Nations system approach to, and presence in, the region. The Council invited the Secretary-General to prepare a report on ways of ensuring such an integrated approach and presence in the countries concerned and the steps already taken to do so.

2. Owing to the unprecedented scope and complexity of the structural transformations taking place in the region, the rapidly evolving situation and the widely varying political, socio-economic, cultural and environmental circumstances of the countries themselves, the present report is inevitably of a preliminary nature. It outlines the initial steps taken over the past year by the organizations of the system, including through the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and other inter-agency mechanisms, to develop an integrated approach, and the action taken to date by the Secretary-General to establish a unified presence in some of the countries of the region. 1/

1/ This report does not provide details of the assistance being provided by individual organizations of the United Nations system to the new independent States (for current information on these activities, reference should be made to the publication entitled "United Nations System's Action in International Assistance to the New Independent States" referred to in para. 10 below), nor does it refer specifically to the work of the political departments of the Organization with respect to the fulfilment of Security Council mandates or the good offices of the Secretary-General in the countries of the region.

3. The importance that the Secretary-General and the organizations of the United Nations system attach to an integrated approach to, and presence in, the region is reflected in the fact that this matter has been one of the principal items on the agenda of ACC during 1992. At its first regular session for 1992, ACC had a comprehensive discussion of the implications for the United Nations system of the transition process in Eastern and Central Europe and in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The issues involved have also been considered by a number of other relevant inter-agency bodies, including the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions - Operations and the Joint Consultative Group on Policies, as well as in bilateral consultations among the organizations concerned.

4. ACC concluded that the provision of assistance to the States in transition was a major challenge that would require collective action by the whole United Nations system. A number of basic principles were highlighted, including respect for the territorial integrity of these States, promotion of human rights and respect for minorities. An important focus of United Nations assistance would be the strengthening of democratic institutions and of market-economy structures. In the short term, the United Nations would also need to extend diplomatic assistance in settling conflicts, as well as to provide humanitarian assistance, including preventive protection aimed at pre-empting displacement or facilitating return of displaced people. At all levels, United Nations organizations and agencies should act in concert in order to avoid duplication of effort. They should work in close cooperation with the Governments of the countries concerned, the donor community and non-governmental organizations to establish a coherent framework of action. The importance of effective coordination was emphasized as was, in that context, the need to ensure a systematic flow of information, both inside and outside the system, in order to facilitate the best possible use of scarce resources.

5. Executive heads of the organizations of the system were conscious that the rapid transition process unfolding in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States was without historical precedent, involving major transformations within every social, cultural, economic and political institution in a highly strategic area of the world. Hasty, prescriptive solutions could prove counter-productive. While caution was required, the need to pursue actions rapidly was generally emphasized. Executive heads considered that the system should stand ready, subject to the availability of appropriate funding, to put its experience to an increasing extent at the disposal of countries in transition in Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and Asia.

6. The role of the United Nations system within the overall assistance efforts was a major focus of discussion in ACC. Among the major concerns expressed were the need to coordinate United Nations assistance with bilateral activities; the impact of the assistance being provided to the countries in transition on other United Nations system programmes; the needs of developing countries that had been receiving assistance from the former Soviet Union; and the importance of ensuring that a greater share of the resources available

from bilateral sources for the countries concerned was channelled through the United Nations system. There was clear agreement on the principle that assistance extended to these countries should not affect global programmes or impair the capacity of the United Nations system to provide assistance to developing countries.

7. The position of the United Nations system at the Coordinating Conferences on Assistance to the New Independent States, held at Washington, D.C., on 24 and 25 January and Lisbon on 23 and 24 May and due to take place in Tokyo on 29 and 30 October 1992, has been based on these considerations. The United Nations system was represented at the first conference by a unified delegation led by the then Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation. At the subsequent conferences the United Nations system again participated as an integrated team led by the Director-General of the World Health Organization. The preparation for and follow-up to these conferences have provided the framework for the development of a coordinated United Nations system response to the overall assistance effort.

8. While each new independent State faces specific problems of transition, requiring assistance tailored to its special needs, the strength of the United Nations system lies in its integrated approach, which addresses the political, socio-economic, environmental and humanitarian dimensions of a situation in a comprehensive way. Within the international framework of assistance for the new independent States that is emerging, the United Nations is stressing the interrelationship between peace and security, democracy and human rights, while providing emergency and humanitarian assistance and helping to establish the conditions for long-term development. Joint inter-agency missions that have visited a number of the countries of the region to assess requirements for humanitarian assistance and longer-term development assistance have emphasized both the need to develop a well coordinated system-wide programme and to avoid straining further the absorptive capacity of the countries concerned.

9. In addition to offering diverse, impartial and cost-effective technical assistance, the United Nations system can provide a framework in which interested multilateral and bilateral parties can work together focusing on the needs of individual countries, while addressing regional and subregional concerns. It can also play a role as an impartial forum for dialogue between policy makers in the new independent States and those in other regions on issues involved in the transition process. A number of options are currently being explored for enhancing this kind of integrated assistance, including the establishment of country consultative groups and round-table coordinating mechanisms.

10. At United Nations Headquarters, an Inter-agency Task Force on the New Independent States was established in early 1992. This inter-agency mechanism has acted as a clearing-house for exchange of information on United Nations activities in the new independent States and has organized the participation of the United Nations system delegation in the Coordinating Conferences. A brochure entitled "United Nations System's Action in International Assistance to the New Independent States", describing the relevant mandates and programme

activities of the various parts of the system, was issued for the Lisbon meeting and substantially updated for the Tokyo conference. This brochure provides comprehensive information on the current involvement of the United Nations system in the new independent States, particularly with respect to activities within the framework of the five working groups established by the Coordinating Conferences, namely, food, medicine, shelter, energy and technical assistance. It also describes the technical assistance and advisory capacities of the United Nations and its specialized agencies and related organizations which are of relevance to the process of transition in the new independent States. The Task Force has also prepared a publication in English and Russian entitled "Modalities of accession to the United Nations specialized agencies" on the conditions of accession to and membership in various United Nations organizations. A newsletter on the new independent States is published regularly to keep the organizations of the United Nations system, Governments, non-governmental organizations, and other interested constituencies abreast of developments relating to United Nations activities in the new independent States.

11. In pursuance of the integrated approach, the Secretary-General, in March 1992, decided to establish integrated United Nations offices in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The first Interim Office was opened in Belarus on 8 September and the others are expected to be operational by the end of the year. In September planning was initiated for the establishment of another office in Georgia. The Secretary-General entrusted responsibility for the establishment of these Interim Offices, which are initially to focus on development assistance and information support to these countries in transition, to the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information. UNDP and the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat are cooperating closely in establishing the terms of reference and operating procedures for a unified field presence. Joint Department of Public Information and UNDP fact-finding missions have visited the countries concerned to assess specific needs, identify premises and negotiate host country agreements. To date host country agreements have been signed with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine and the remaining agreements are expected to be signed shortly.

12. The Interim Offices, which will be staffed by personnel from both UNDP and the Department of Public Information, will have one head of office, appointed by the Secretary-General with the title of United Nations Representative. Such an office will ensure that the United Nations speaks with one voice at the country level, but does not imply any rigid or limiting bureaucratic structure. Further staff from other parts of the United Nations Secretariat or from other programmes and funds may be added as circumstances warrant. In this regard, the Secretary-General has indicated that, should other departments, programmes or funds of the United Nations wish to establish a field presence in any of these countries, he would expect their representative to become part of the integrated United Nations Office. He has also informed the specialized agencies that these offices would be available to serve those agencies which wished to make use of their administrative

services. ACC has welcomed the establishment of these offices and many executive heads have indicated interest in utilizing their services.

13. Initially, the Offices will be jointly financed by UNDP and the United Nations. Financial, personnel and administrative modalities are currently being finalized. The arrangements put in place in order to ensure a swift response to the needs of the countries concerned do not prejudge any future arrangements that may be made with other organizations that join these Offices in the future. The operation of the Offices will be reviewed in the coming months and adjustments made in light of experience.

14. The Secretary-General is of the view that this new approach to the provision of United Nations assistance at the field level, which is in accordance with the concepts outlined by him in his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/47/1) and the foreword to his report to the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council on "Enhancing inter-agency cooperation for development: the role of the United Nations system" (E/1992/82 and Add.1), responds to the concerns of Member States with respect to an integrated approach and integrated presence in the Baltic States and the Commonwealth of Independent States. He also regards this unified presence as an essential part of the integrated approach to the political and socio-economic missions of the United Nations.